

GUEST EDITORIAL

Benign breast disease

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This edition of *CME* focusing on benign breast disease is long overdue – breast symptoms are common, and when the dreaded carcinoma is excluded, all too often patients are left to fend for themselves, with little guidance about the management of the actual underlying concern or pathology. Doctors' knowledge of the common benign conditions of the breast is frequently sketchy, and patients run the risk of being either dismissed with incorrect, superficial advice, or alternatively grossly over-investigated, starting a spiral of inadequate, indeterminate investigations, fuelling patient anxiety, costs and potentially harmful and unnecessary invasive procedures.

Clearly the answer lies in finding a sensible middle ground between these two extremes, and while this may be an elusive, utopian goal, we hope that the articles in this edition will assist all those practitioners who manage patients with breast pathology and symptoms to be more knowledgeable and practical in their care.

Lydia Cairncross gives a thorough overview of mastalgia, the commonest presenting symptom for any breast consultation, and

takes readers through the multiple investigative options as well as the therapies available. Jenny Edge guides us on the management of young women with benign disease, a group of patients all too often poorly treated and advised. Central to all breast-related reviews is the approach to a clinically palpable mass, and Ines Buccimazza outlines her thoughts on this essential topic eloquently. Shas Čačala gives a review of breast problems in pregnancy and the puerperium, and we hope that her article may be of use to medical practitioners, midwives and other health professionals who commonly manage these problems. Aaron Ndhuni gives a review on the management of gynaecomastia, and Anne Gudgeon discusses the management principles of a nipple discharge. Finally Ryno Verster has written a practical article on the technical procedures that a medical practitioner may be called upon to perform when evaluating a breast complaint.

We hope that this edition is helpful to as many readers as possible, and that it provides some practical and sensible guidelines for your clinical practice.



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